(b) A team of Revenue officials of the Government of Rajasthan has conducted a survey to ascertain damages to houses etc. The team found some minor damages in some of the houses in the Pokharan area, estimated to the tune of Rs. 3.62 lakh. Compensation for that amount was extended as relief to the villagers, which, however, was not accepted by the villagers, even though the relief offered was much higher than the relief provided in case of damages caused by natural calamities.

(c) Yes, Sir. Survey conducted by a team of doctors sent by the Government of Rajasthan has observed no effect of radioactivity to any person in the area.

Peaceful uses of Nuclear Energy

2487. SHRI ASHOK MITRA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether proposals are on the anvil of invite officials from Pakistan's atomic establishment to have a discussion with their Indian counterparts on joint or several initiatives in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy;

(b) whether, even in the absence of official level initiatives, Government will encourage groups of scientists and technologists from India to establish direct contact with their counterparts in Pakistan to discuss such matters; and

(c) whether the Government have any information of infiltration by outsiders into India's atomic research centres?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) Government have no such proposals for consideration before them.

(b) Government are not considering any such proposal.

(c) No, Sir.

Opinion of permanent UN Security Council members on Nuclear tests

2488. DR. MOHAN BABU: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether five permanent U.N. Security Council Members tentatively agreed to avoid threatening sanctions against India over nuclear testings during negotiations on a draft U.N. resolution recently; and

(b) if so, what is the reaction of the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) The UN Security Council resolution 1172 adopted on 6th June, 1998 does not contain any reference to sanctions.

(b) Question does not arise.

Rehabilitation of persons repatriated from UAE

2489. SHRI GOVINDRAM MIRI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large number of Indian labourers living unauthorisedly in UAE had been repatriated/driven out during 1996-97;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government took suitable steps to rehabilitate them; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) and (b) About 60000 Indian nationals, who were declared to be illegal residents by the UAE authorities, were deported between July 1 and October 31, 1996 under an amnesty scheme.

(c) Yes, sir.

(d) To facilitate the return of these Indian nationals to the UAE and their

rehabilitation there, the following measures were taken by Government:

(i) special counters were set up in select Passport Offices in India to enable expeditious issue of passports to those who had returned on Emergency Certifictes;

(ii) the Indian Embassy in Abu Dhabi and Consulate General in Dubai maintained close and continuous contact with the local authorities to ensure that the returnees did not have any restrictions placed on their re-entry into the UAE; and

(iii) the mandatory requirement of attestation of employment visas by the Indian Embassy/Consulate in the UAE was suspended by the Ministry of Labour.

Impact of nuclear tests on relations with neighbouring countries

2490. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the nuclear tests conducted by India recently will have any impact on Indo-Pak talks;

(b) if so, whether the relations between the neighbouring countries have been affected at large;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the steps Government have taken to strengthen relations with the neighbouring countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMAN VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) India desires to establish peaceful and friendly ties under stable structure of cooperation with Pakistan. This has been reiterated in Prime Minister's letter dated 14 June, 1998 to the Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. In his response, the Pakistan Prime Minister has indicated his willingness to discuss all issues of mutual concern with our Prime Minister during the forthcoming SAARC Sumit in Colombo. Government will continue to pursue its endeavours to engage in a substantive dialogue with Pakistan to resolve all outstanding issues.

(b) and (c) The continuation of a process of dialogue with neighbouring countries, as indicated by the recent visits to India by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, the President of Maldives and the Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, demonstrates that India's nuclear tests have not adversely affected our relations with neighbouring countries, with the exception of Pakistan. Some of these countries have expressed understanding of the rationale underlying India's decision to conduct the nuclear tests.

(d) Government has taken several steps to strengthen and promote closer cooperation and consultations with neighbouring countries in a variety of fields. Government has also announced a series of initiatives aimed at addressing concerns in the wake of our nuelear tests.

US Foreign policy regarding China and India

2491. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to a news-item published in the Hindustan Times, dated 18th June, 1998 captioned "Congressman Frank Pallone against linking N-tests with Kashmir-U.S. Policy comes up for criticism in both Houses of U.S. Congress";

(b) whether Senator Connie Mack also criticised the Clinton administration's policy as "irrationality of the U.S. rewarding an authoritarian China even as it sanctions democratic India"; and

(c) if so, what is Government's reaction to U.S. foreign which favours China over India as alleged by Senator Mack?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) Yes, Sir.